

# COMMANDER'S HATCH

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## 1998 Armor Conference

# A Focus on the Leadership Challenge

The 1998 Armor Conference is rapidly approaching, and the Fort Knox team is in the final stages of planning this annual event. From May 17th through the 21st, the United States Army Armor Center will once again become the focal point for tankers and cavalymen all over the world, for it is in this setting that the Armor Force conducts an open and honest discussion of the issues affecting mounted warriors. As is the standard at the Home of Mounted Warfare, we have come up with an outstanding program. The two-day Armor Trainer Update (ATU) will take place on May 17th and 18th, giving our Army National Guard and Army Reserve brethren the opportunity to discuss issues specific to their areas. The Unit Scheduling Conference will be held in conjunction with the ATU and will give units from all components the opportunity to schedule the Fort Knox training areas and the highly successful Virtual Training Program. The much acclaimed Armor Conference Golf Scramble will be held on the 19th, followed immediately by the garden party and Regimental Assemblies. The Armor Conference itself will kick off on the 20th. We have added a half day to the presentation schedule, so you can expect to receive two full days of briefings/discussions prior to our adjournment late on the afternoon of the 21st.

The Armor Center looks forward to welcoming an estimated 800 guests from locations all over the world. It's interesting to note that each year we see an increase in the attendance of soldiers and officers from allied nations. This is a testament to the quality and content of our conference presentations, and this year will be no exception. Numerous government contractors will once again set up

displays in Skidgel Hall giving everybody the opportunity to see the latest military equipment and next-generation training devices. The planning and preparation for this event is enormous, and our continued success can be attributed to a post-level effort involving hundreds of people. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all those responsible for the presentations, social activities sponsored by the Armor Association, and overall support provided by the Fort Knox garrison. I encourage everyone to attend this first-class Armor Center symposium.

Past armor conferences have focused on emerging technologies, new equipment, digitization, and ever-changing mission requirements. The U.S. Army mounted force has the best equipment, the most highly-trained soldiers, and the most effective training programs in the world. All of our technology and new equipment is useless if not for our most valuable asset: well-trained, well-led, combat-ready soldiers. Thus, "leadership" will be the focus during the 49th annual Armor Conference with a theme entitled "The Mounted Leader Today and Into Tomorrow."

The Armor branch has produced some of the Army's most visionary leaders. Notable historical figures, such as Chaffee, Walker, Patton, Abrams, and Sullivan, were able to inspire and lead soldiers at all levels throughout some of the most turbulent times in our nation's military history. Periods of dramatic change, introductions of new equipment and technology, and changes in organizational structures were significant challenges for them to overcome. We find ourselves in the same situation today. If the Armor Force is to continue a tradition of excellence, today's leaders need

to exercise the same qualities and foresight as those in the past have demonstrated. Today's leaders must not only be visionary, but also infused with the warrior spirit. In a peacetime Army, management skills are often those most recognized and rewarded. It is much harder to distinguish the true warrior leaders from those that are simply managers. It is our warrior leaders, who can capably lead soldiers and manage resources in peacetime, who will win our future battles and wars.

This is the challenge I pose to you: we must do everything in our power to attract, develop, and retain the best soldiers and officers who will lead the Armor Force into the next century. Technological advances and new equipment fielding are important, but we must not overlook some of the basic fundamentals of soldiering. We must recreate an environment where inspirational leadership, technological competence, and the warrior spirit can permeate throughout our force. We've seen what future conflicts and missions will look like, and we've seen that the small-unit leader with boots on the ground is the most important facet of a military operation. The speakers who will deliver Armor Conference presentations will include our senior armor/cavalry leadership and the senior leadership from the Infantry, Aviation and Artillery Schools, and each is cognizant of the fact that effective leaders will make or break our Army.

I highly encourage you to attend this event. I guarantee you will leave Fort Knox with a better understanding of the challenges we face, and with a shared vision of where we, as a mounted force, need to focus our efforts. See you at the Conference!